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HINTS FOR A SYSTEM, &c.

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HINTS FOR A SYSTEM
OF
EDUCATION,
FOR A
FEMALE ORPHAN-HOUSE.

IN A LETTER TO
MRS. PETER LATOUCHE.

K BY EUBANTE. X

There are very few trades for WOMEN; the MEN have usurped two-thirds of those that used to belong to them; the remainder are overstocked, and there are few resources for them.

CLARA REEVE.

X eu-pauw - Walker

DUBLIN:

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M DCC XCIII.



So weak, so unprotected is our sex,
So constantly expos'd, so very helpless ;
That did not Heav'n itself enjoin compassion,
Yet human policy shou'd make us kind,
Left we should need the pity we refuse.

HANNAH MORE.

HINTS FOR A SYSTEM, &c.

MADAM,

YOU will, perhaps, be surpris'd to find yourself address'd by one who cannot boast the honor of your personal acquaintance. But your virtues have familiarized you to me. Hence I feel myself embolden'd to take this liberty. But do not imagine, Madam, that I am about to wound your ear with praise. Human praise cannot be grateful to her who

is

is a candidate for eternal glory, and who has sent up her claim to the throne of the Almighty, upon the *blessings of the fatherless.*

But I shall not detain you longer from the object of this letter.

During my absence last year from this kingdom, an Orphan-House arose, at the voice of charity, in the vicinity of this city. This house, I find, is to be peopled with female children who have been long fed by your bounty, and whose little hands are daily raised to bless you.

I am ignorant of your plan for the regulation of this house, but presume it is calculated to promote mental cultivation and a spirit of industry ; to inspire an horror of vice, and a love of virtue*.

Supposing

* Mr. Howard tells us, that in several of the cantons of Switzerland he did not find a single felon in the prisons.

“ The

Supposing my conjecture to be well founded, I shall take leave to submit to your consideration a few hints for the expansion of your plan.

I have long considered the sphere of female industry as too confined; and one of the wishes nearest to my heart, is to see it enlarged. "The few employments open to women (says Mrs. Wollstonecraft,) so far from being liberal, are menial." I could not expect that a voice so feeble as mine would be heard in the senate of the nation,—but perhaps it may find attention within the walls of the temple to charity, of which you have laid the foundation.

"The principal reason of it is, (says he) the great care that is taken to give children, even the poorest, a moral and religious education." *State of Prisons*, p. 108. I trust, that the example of the Orphan-House which has given birth to this letter, may produce, in this kingdom, an effect similar to that of the wise policy of the Swiss, thus honorably noticed by the *prisoners' friend*.

Seconda, Eterno padre,
Così belle speranze!

tion. I shall raise it, whatever may be its fate.

The idler is the object of the tempter. Whoever has enquired into the history of the *fallen part* of your sex, must have traced the cause of their degradation to idleness. This idleness, from which the misfortunes of so many miserable females flow, is occasioned by the paucity of arts for the employment of women; or rather by the stubborn prejudices which shackle their hands. By increasing, then, the sphere of their activity, several thousand lovely forms may be saved from the spoiler, and the interest and happiness of society considerably promoted. An example is wanting. Set one, Madam. Let not an heavenly crown be the only object of your ambition.

But I have promised you a few hints. I shall proceed to give them.

On

On the subject of mental education, I shall be silent. I presume your reading has extended to every work upon that subject from the fanciful Rousseau, to the philosophic Mauley; and that the essence of all those plans enters into the composition of your's. Your plan, I am sure, does not go to raise the mind of the *children of charity* above the situation in life in which it is probable they may be placed; nor to condemn them to penury of ideas. It will teach them, I doubt not, to think, and furnish them with materials for the exercise of thought. Though ignorant of your plan, I shall not hesitate to pronounce it founded in reason.

Passing over mental, I shall proceed to MANUAL EDUCATION; the subject to which I shall now beg your attention.

It is evident from the texture of the female frame, that it was never intended for exertions of great bodily strength. The club appeared

as ridiculous in the hand of Dejanira, as the distaff in that of Hercules. Our employments should be proportioned to the powers which they call into action, whether mental or corporeal. By observing this rule, we shall always be equal to our respective undertakings. It is seldom, indeed, we see women engaged in tasks exceeding their corporeal powers; but we often find men employed in manual labours to which women are, in every respect, equal. To such labours women have a presumptive right. It rests with you, Madam, to establish that right by making those arts, to which the female powers are adequate, constitute a part of the plan of education for your Orphan-House. Your discernment would direct your notice to the arts to which I allude, and professors of those arts might be induced to give their attendance, occasionally, either by the promise of reward, or by the hope of enjoying the *luxury of doing good*.

I shall

I shall not, Madam, enter into an enumeration of the arts which seem to me calculated for female powers: I shall only briefly touch upon a few of them.

Midwifery claims our first notice from its consequence to human existence. Mrs. Wollstonecraft after observing, that women were not created

“ To suckle fools and chronicle small beer,”

continues; “ Women might certainly study
 “ the art of healing, and be physicians as well
 “ as nurses. And midwifery, says she, delicacy seems to allot to them, though I am
 “ afraid the word midwife, in our dictionaries, will soon give place to *accoucheur*,
 “ and one proof of the former delicacy of the
 “ sex be effaced from the language.” I shall confess myself of the same opinion, and to have the same fears of this able advocate for the rights of her sex.

I would

I would totally exclude men from the toilets of the fair. Delicacy should bar the door. A man is not necessary to prepare a lady for conquest; a woman is fully equal to the important task, and I should think more equal to it than a man. A female only should be allowed to pass a comb through the hair of a female; it requires not the strength of a man to urge it, and the taste of a female should best know how to conduct it, particularly when

“Awful beauty puts on all its arms.”

In the rude days of Homer, the dressing-room of a lady was her *sanctum sanctorum*: even her maid was not allowed to assist at her toilet. In conformity to this custom, the Grecian bard makes Juno retire, unattended, to prepare her charms to oppose the wisdom of Jove,

Swift to her bright apartment she repairs,
Sacred to dress, and beauty's pleasing cares.
With skill divine had Vulcan form'd the bower,
Safe from access of each intruding power,

Touch'd

Touch'd with her secret key, the doors unfold ;
 Self-clos'd behind her shut the valves of gold,
 Here first she bathes ; and round her body pours
 Soft oils of fragrance, and ambrosial showers.

Young ladies ought to be instructed in the elegant accomplishments, such as Drawing, Dancing, and Music, by professors of their own sex. Experience teaches us, that females are capable of reaching the highest degree of excellence in those arts. And we also learn from experience, the danger which attends the allowing of a dancing-master to press the soft hand of his scholar in the mazes of a minuet ; or a music-master to languish and sigh over his pupil at an harpsicord, throwing a tender expression into his voice, while he accompanies her in an air, and occasionally looking *unutterable things*. Abelards and St. Preux's are not wanting amongst the modern professors of the elegant accomplishments.

Within my memory, the art of Stay-making has been wrested from the women,
 and

and given to the men. Now, I can conceive nothing more indecent than the permitting the touch and eye of a rude artizan, to usurp the sacred rights of an husband. But I am afraid to enlarge on this subject lest I should forget that I am addressing myself to a lady. I shall only add, let the art of Stay-making be restored to those who are privileged, by modesty, to exercise it.—When I thus endeavour to restore this art to the women, it may be presumed I do not think with Swift that

Florimel wears iron stays,

or Corinna,

A steel-ribb'd bodice.

If I thought so, I should leave the art where the sarcastic Dean insinuates he found it.

In Geneva, I believe, it is customary to employ women in making certain parts of a Watch. I should be glad to see them employed in the
same

same way here, if Irish watches should ever be sought for in foreign markets.

The women seem to assert an exclusive right to the art of Embroidery. I think they have an equal claim to throwing the Shuttle. The Dames of antiquity engrossed those arts; and the Goddesses of Wisdom patronised them. Here, Madam, permit me to bring to your recollection, Homer's beautiful picture of Penelope,

While she, laborious in delusion, spread
The spacious loom, and mix'd the various thread.

The works of the Hon. Mrs. Damer, and the late Countess of Clanbrassil, are existing proofs of the ability with which a female hand can use the Chissel, or turn the Lathe. And Mrs. Wright's power over Wax, is almost Promethean.

Sir

Sir William Temple, who expresses much solicitude for the employment of the lower class of females in Ireland, says, "No women are apter to spin it (flax) well than the Irish, who labouring little in any kind with their hands, have their fingers more supple and soft than other women of the poorer condition among us." I wish that our female peasantry, availing themselves of this happy flexibility of finger, would increase the number of

"The spinsters and the knitters in the Sun
And the free maids that weave their threads with bones."

The last line of this quotation reminds me, that considerable sums of money are annually sent out of this kingdom to Mechlin and other parts of Flanders, for the article of Thread-Lace, which might be equally well made here by the wives and daughters of the working-class of our mechanics. Indeed, I believe, there is a sisterhood of Moravians in this city, employed

ed in that way ; but the scale of their institution is too small, and their funds too inconsiderable to afford a sufficient supply for the consumption even of the Dublin market. As Thread-Lace is an article of general use, it would give employment to females in every part of the kingdom.

If I were to take a more comprehensive view of my subject, I could name several little articles of taste, in straw, in wood, and in ivory, on which the ingenuity of women might be successfully exercised, and for which we are now obliged to have recourse to the English and other markets ; while the women who might be thus employed, are necessitated to barter their honor for bread.

Amongst the articles to which I allude, are Straw-Baskets for fruit and other purposes, imported from Switzerland. How many delicious hours have I spent amidst a group of fe-

C

males

males on the romantic borders of the lake of Geneva, watching the progress of hats and baskets in straw, and listening to the artless tales and simple melodies of those children of elegant simplicity!

Having thus briefly pointed out a few occupations for the exercise of female industry and ingenuity, I shall hasten to conclude this letter. On the subject which induced me to take up my pen, I shall not add any thing more. But I must beg leave to express a wish, Madam, that you would endeavour to make the benevolence of your female friends, a little more active. Prevail upon them, Madam, to defraud the toilet and the morning visit of a few hours in the week, to devote, with Samaritanic philanthropy, to the care of the widow, the orphan, and the decayed mechanic. Let them assist you in exploring the habitation of misery, and in making the *widow's heart to leap for joy*. Let them join with you in calling

calling forth the talents of the orphan, and in directing those talents to their proper objects. Let them accompany you through the sick-ward, and see that the dispensers of public bounty do not abuse their trust.—Tell them, Madam, that the loftiest dames of the voluptuous Court of France were once so occupied*. Tell them, that active benevolence is its own reward. Tell them, that the moment their fine feelings shall become interested either in the Orphan-House, or in the hospital, that they will thank you for relieving them from the *ennui* of an insipid morning visit. But do not fail to tell them, Madam, from your own experience, that the acts of charity of the morning, give a poignancy to the pleasures of the evening. Tell them all this, Madam, and they will become your *fellow labourers in the vineyard*.

* The seminary of St. Cyr was, for many years, the daily resort of

“ The gay, licentious proud.”

One word more, and I shall have done. As a friend to the institution which you are fostering, allow me to embrace this public opportunity of offering my thanks to the Rev. Mr. Kirwan for the benefits it has received from the influence of his matchless eloquence, which, upon all occasions, flows in a stream rich as Pactolus. And here let me express a trembling hope, that the calamitous state of the times may not, on the 28th inst. lessen the influence of that eloquence, and oblige you either to diminish or disperse your little flock. It should be remembered in this awful moment, when the sword of the Almighty seems suspended over our heads, that a few acts of charity may avail something towards averting the stroke.

But I shall not detain you longer from your *good works*. Proceed in the path you have taken. And when it shall please Heaven to remove

(17)

remove you, your grave shall be bedewed with
the tears of orphans, and your brow incircled
with a ray of glory !

I have the honor to be,

MADAM,

With great respect,

Your most obedient

humble servant,

EUBANTE.

Dublin,
15th April, 1793.

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